

for, in fairness to the Emperors, we must take some note of the roseate accounts of the official rhetoricians. Nazarius, for example, explicitly declares that Constantine had given the Empire "peace abroad, prosperity at home, abundant harvests, and cheap food." * Eusebius again and again conjures up a vision of prosperous and contented peoples, living not in fear of the tax-collector, but in the enjoyment of their sovereign's bounty. But we fear that the sombre view is nearer the truth than the radiant one, and that the subsequent financial ruin, which overtook the western even more than the eastern provinces, was largely due to the oppressive and wasteful fiscal system introduced and developed by Diocletian and Constantine, and to the old standing defect of Roman administration, that the civil governor was also the judge, and thus administrative and judicial functions were combined in the same hands.

Here, indeed, lay one of the strongest elements of disintegration in the reorganised Empire, but there were other powerful solvents at work, at which we may briefly glance. One was slavery, the evil results of which had been steadily accumulating for centuries, and if these were mitigated to some extent by the increasing scarcity of slaves, the degradation of the poor freeman to the position of a *colonus* more than counterbalanced the resultant good. Population, so far from increasing, was going back, and, in order to fill the gaps, the authorities had re-

* *Omnia foris placida, domi prospera ; annonae ubertas, fructuum copia* (Pan. Vet., x., 38).